

**ABSTRACT**

Archival storage and retrieval of audio/video information is described. Audio and/or video information is digitized, compressed and stored in an intermediate archive format (IAF), which preserves the content at a high-enough quality for subsequent retrieval and conversion into various formats required at the time of use or distribution. A single capture operation is performed with ancillary metadata being added to facilitate subsequent searching, indexing and format conversion. Captured data content is catalogued and indexed at or subsequent to the creation of an IAF file that includes the archived information. The IAF includes a family of audio-video digital encoding formats based on public standards. The encoding format used in any particular application is determined at encoding time from information provided by the archive system user. At encoding, the particular encoding scheme is selected to optimize a tradeoff between storage constraints and end use quality requirements.